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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: THE 'HEART' OF LEADERSHIP

by

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In the film, *The Lion King*, Simba the lion is challenged by the monkey, Rafiki. Rafiki asks Simba, do you know who you are? How well have you changed with the times? What is your vision for the future? How good are you at handling your emotions? The ghost of his father, Mufasa, challenges Simba about developing his potential. We learn that we are not only what we think – cogito, ergo sum – 'I think, therefore I am'. We are also what we feel - I feel, therefore I am'.¹

Self-awareness, change, vision, emotion, potential – these are the themes in a business environment that has been changing increasingly rapidly in recent years. David Vice, CEO of Northern Telecom, puts it graphically: there are two types of company – the quick and the dead.² Some 80% of the Fortune 500 companies in 1975 are now dead. And many of the largest companies in the world by market capitalisation are less than 15 years' old. The largest mobile telephone company in the world, Vodaphone Airtouch, did not exist in 1985. What do all of these companies have in common? The answer is: they are fleet of foot. Old-economy companies are struggling to compete with the new kids on the block.

Take banking, for instance. Who in Barclays and Natwest ten years ago would have envisaged competing with Tesco for financial services? Who there predicted that, to compete in the market, the barrier to entry would be simply first-rate information technology and a world-class call centre? The reality is that your next major competitor may not even be in your business yet. But when it is, its entry will be swift and potentially devastating.

The point is that the old rules of doing business and competition no longer apply, if indeed they ever did. Virgin, Amazon and Cisco – and all the dot.com companies – know this only too well. Such companies have fundamentally changed the way we think about products and services. In 2000, Cisco will generate 95% of its sales over the Internet; its goal is 100%. The new competitors are both agile and innovative:

Increased globalisation, competitiveness, speed and quality of information exchange means people are expected to cope with unprecedented levels of change. We've got to be more flexible, more creative, more adept and more responsive if we want to survive.³

The old rules and bureaucracy go hand in hand. Bureaucracy has no place in the new competitors: 'Organisations are more fluid. The emphasis is on team-working. The capacity to make and maintain relationships is more important.'⁴

While many company chairmen's annual reports proclaim that 'people are our major asset', today this can be said with even greater feeling. Many companies have been downsized, re-engineered or re-aligned. These developments have had great human impact, creating many issues to do with emotions: damage to self-esteem, insecurity and perceived loss of power and status. Rebuilding the 'psychological infrastructure'⁵ has become a preoccupation of HR and OD practitioners. And we have moved out of the industrial age into the information age, and now we face the knowledge age. It is *people* who have knowledge. Karl Marx's asserted that workers should own the major assets of society and the critical means of production: now they do – it is in their brains.⁶ It is you and I who are now the critical factor in the new business world. And the challenge for leadership is to engage people not just intellectually but emotionally too.

So where does this leave leaders? The unprecedented rate of change in the business environment and the rules of doing business has left many of us feeling uncomfortable and often confused and frightened. Yet 'change is the only constant' in today's business world.⁷ Change produces emotional reactions, and there is no 'intellectual' way of handling these emotions.

The emotional challenge for us as leaders is to create a business environment in which constant innovation can flourish, to create exciting opportunities to which talent will be attracted, and to be self-confident and agile enough to constantly review and change our leadership styles and behaviour and consequently improve our effectiveness. While intellectual firepower is ever necessary, it is no longer enough. The key to personal sustainability as an effective leader is our emotional intelligence.

Developing our emotional intelligence is about our commitment to personal growth and change. Just as the rules of the economy have changed, so have the rules for leadership. Command and control is dead. Personal innovation is the live issue. Business requires maestros, not masters. So let us now look at why emotion is so important in human behaviour and leadership.

Emotion at Work

Human beings think and feel. We know a lot about how we think – how we analyse, reason and make decisions. This is what, in the past, we have called 'intelligence', and we measure it as 'IQ'. However, we have come to recognize that there are many forms of human intelligence – verbal, numerical, spatial, artistic, and so on. Traditional measures of intelligence do not predict who will succeed in life.⁸ Only recently have we come to describe and understand perhaps the most important form of intelligence for human beings – 'emotional intelligence'. And we now measure it as 'EQ'.

We all experience emotion in our lives, not least at work. Emotion takes both positive, pleasant forms as well as negative, unpleasant forms – for example, elation at gaining a promotion, fear of redundancy, excitement over a new project, fury at one's manager's behaviour, and jealousy over a colleague's success.⁹ While emotion has been studied for many decades by psychologists, it has not figured much in the study of work in general and leadership in particular - until recently. Why? Steve Fineman suggests a reason:

Deeply rooted in Western (especially male) cultural beliefs about the expression of emotion is the belief that organizational order and manager/worker efficiency are matters of the rational, that is non-

emotional, activity. Cool strategic thinking is not to be sullied by messy feelings. Efficient thought and behaviour tame emotion. Accordingly good organizations are places where feelings are managed, designed out, or removed.¹⁰

Michael Eisner, Chairman and CEO of Walt Disney, warns of the dangers of ignoring emotion:

Being in connection with our emotional depths is critical to releasing our most powerful and creative forces. Denying this deeper level leads to disconnection. In effect people lose touch with who they are. The result tends to be vulnerability, fear and denial, as well as superficiality, falseness, and a mistrust of intuition – all of which can get in the way of deep creative expression.¹¹

Rob Briner gives us a perhaps all-too-familiar example of what happens when we ignore feelings:¹²

1. Jane is asked to carry out a difficult project, usually given only to more experienced colleagues. She feels valued, flattered and trusted – also a little worried.
2. While working hard on the project, her emotions range from excitement and elation to fear and frustration.
3. Jane completes the task and feels proud and relieved.
4. She tells her boss and shows her completed work.
5. He boss gives no thanks or praise and picks out a trivial error.
6. Jane then feels resentful and angry and decides that she will never again put herself out for her boss. She feels exploited.
7. She starts thinking about looking for another job. She feels sad and disappointed and doesn't volunteer to do any additional jobs any more.
8. Jane updates her CV and starts looking at job advertisements.

We need feeling as well as thinking people, says Kjell Nordstrom:

In an excess economy success comes from attracting the emotional consumer or colleague, not the rational one...We need not only agile thinkers, but acting, feeling and communicating human beings as well.¹³

The expression of emotions can have very positive outcomes. For example, excitement is contagious: it can stimulate others into action.¹⁴ And one's own motivation to achieve may be enhanced by the happiness or joy resulting from achievement.¹⁵

Emotional reactions, however, may have adverse effects on one's own judgement, task performance and well-being as well as on one's relationships with others.¹⁶ Kevin Daniels suggests that negative emotions, for example, may affect the way managers make major strategic decisions about their organizations.¹⁷ It is emotions that explain why irrational decisions are often made. The heart may rule the head with adverse consequences even at top level in an organisation. The damaging effects of strong negative emotions at work are well documented and were

graphically illustrated a couple of years ago in the BBC series *Hotel*, which depicted employee and customer relations at the Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool.

We now understand a great deal about emotion and its relationship to our behaviour. And we have come to accept the need to 'manage' both our own and other people's emotions. This is not at all to encourage exploiting other people's feelings, but to *enable* both ourselves and those with whom we interact to function effectively and achieve business results and job satisfaction. We call this emotional intelligence.

What is Emotional Intelligence?

First the feeling, then the thought. The emotional mind is far quicker than the rational mind, springing into action without pausing even a moment to consider what it is doing. This suggests that emotion has a more immediate and perhaps even greater impact on our behaviour than rational thought. However, it is difficult, and perhaps even unrealistic, to separate feeling from thinking in practice. For the 'emotional brain', housed in the structure in the limbic system called the amygdala, works very closely and speedily with the 'thinking brain' in the pre-frontal cortex, and this relationship provides us with emotional intelligence.¹⁸ It is well known that effective learning, for example, depends on the interaction between cognitive and emotional processes.

Useful ideas about emotional intelligence have developed only in the last decade, with concepts such as 'interpersonal intelligence'¹⁹, 'personal intelligence'²⁰, emotional quotient (EQ)²¹, and 'emotional literacy'²². But their roots go back to the 1920s with the concept of 'social intelligence'.²³

A theory of emotional intelligence was put forward by Ayman Sawaf, co-founder of Advanced Intelligence Technologies and chairman of the Foundation for Education in Emotional Literacy, and Robert Cooper of Q-Metrics.²⁴ They see emotional intelligence as 'the ability to sense, understand and effectively apply the power...of emotions...' and suggest that there are three broad aspects of emotional intelligence, with 14 factors within them:

- Emotional Literacy
 - Emotional self-awareness
 - Emotional expression
 - Emotional awareness of others
- Emotional Competencies
 - Intentionality
 - Creativity
 - Resilience
 - Interpersonal connections
 - Constructive discontent
- Values and Beliefs
 - Compassion
 - Outlook
 - Intuition
 - Trust radius
 - Personal power
 - Integrity

Daniel Goleman formulated the best-known theory of emotional intelligence in 1995. According to Goleman, 'emotional intelligence refers to a different way of being smart. It's not your IQ. It's how well you handle yourself and handle your relationships, how well you work on a team, your ability to lead.'²⁵ And it is 'the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships'.²⁶

Research by Daniel Goleman and Richard Boyatzis, former CEO of HayMcBer (and leading researcher into competencies in the 1980s) has identified four dimensions of EI and 20 factors within them.²⁷

- Self-Awareness
 - Emotional self-awareness
 - Accurate self-assessment
 - Self-confidence
- Self-Management
 - Self-control
 - Trustworthiness
 - Conscientiousness
 - Adaptability
 - Achievement orientation
 - Initiative
- Social Awareness
 - Empathy
 - Organizational awareness
 - Service orientation
- Social Skills
 - Developing others
 - Leadership
 - Influence
 - Communication
 - Change catalysis
 - Conflict management
 - Building bonds
 - Teamwork and collaboration

Vic Dulewicz and Malcolm Higgs at Henley Management College suggest there are seven dimensions of emotional intelligence²⁸:

- Self-Awareness
- Emotional Resilience
- Motivation
- Interpersonal Sensitivity
- Influence and Persuasion
- Decisiveness
- Conscientiousness and Integrity

However defined, EI is the basis for communication, trust, respect, influence, motivation, commitment and creativity.

Is 'emotional intelligence' merely a recycling of what we used to call the 'soft' skills of management and leadership? Is it not just another case of old wine in new bottles? We do not believe this is so. These so-called soft skills relate to *interpersonal intelligence* – relating to others – whereas emotional intelligence also involves *intrapersonal* intelligence – knowing oneself, which is necessary before one can understand others.²⁹ Recent work on emotional intelligence has refocused what we know about the place of emotion in human behaviour. And because human behaviour is the focus and outcome of leadership, we have now come to understand leadership not only as an intellectual, cognitive process but also as a social, behavioural and emotional process. The key difference in our understanding of this is the new importance we now give to self-awareness in our leadership role.

We at The Leadership Trust use a simple operational definition of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-control, awareness of others, and the ability to respond appropriately.

EI and self-awareness

'We lie loudest when we lie to ourselves'³⁰ And how can we recognize and respond to other people's feelings if we don't recognize and respond to our own?

At The Leadership Trust we believe that, as leaders, we need to know and control ourselves first before we can lead and enable others. We believe that understanding ourselves helps us to better understand other people. High-performing managers have been shown to be significantly more self-aware than average performers.³¹ Self-awareness is the foundation for emotional intelligence. Self-awareness gives individuals greater perceived control over interpersonal events.³² And transformational leaders who are self-aware display high levels of self-confidence.³³ Self-awareness self-evidently is the starting point for self-development.

What characterizes self-awareness?

Personal Insight

Personal insight is our awareness of how we are feeling and why we are feeling that way. It is also our awareness of our behaviour that is being driven by our feelings and, more importantly, our awareness of its impact on others. To achieve personal insight requires honesty with ourselves.

Accurate Self-assessment

Accurate self-assessment adds to personal insight and entails understanding our strengths and limitations as well as our emotional needs. To achieve such understanding we need constant feedback on our leadership style and its impact on others. Effective leaders create a culture of openness and feedback, whether informally or formally through 360-degree processes.

Humility and Self-confidence

Some managers find it difficult to offer an apology, believing that they will expose themselves to criticism or loss of face. In fact the converse may often prove true.

Managers may gain credibility and respect for having 'owned up' to a subordinate, who then feels that justice has been done and as a result is willing to focus on resolving the problem.³⁴

Leaders who are self-aware take responsibility for their actions. In this sense they display humility. The ability to say 'I was wrong', 'I don't know', or 'You are right, and I think I need to change the way I see this' is not an admission of weakness but arguably in the eyes of other people a strength. Humility, then, is the basis for developing self-confidence.

Personal Vision

As Rafiki demonstrates in *The Lion King*, a key part of self-awareness is understanding who we are and what we want from life: our personal vision. When we ask who we are, we are asking what our values are, what we stand for. If we don't know this, how can we have anything against which to judge ourselves? One way of capturing our personal vision, which we use in our leadership development programmes at The Leadership Trust, is to ask: what legacy do you want to leave as a leader? A wonderful scene in the film *Dead Poets Society* illustrates this: *carpe diem!*

EI and self-control

Self-awareness is necessary as the foundation for emotional intelligence, but by itself it is not enough. The emotionally intelligent leader exercises self-control.

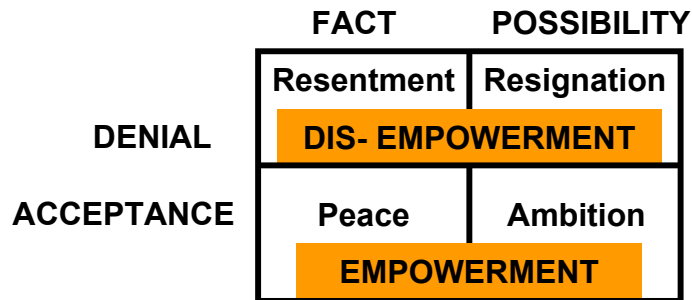
The importance of self-control is highlighted in a case study of Gravitas Public Relations in Cheltenham.³⁵ While staff had high levels of 'happiness' as a team, their impulse control was weak. Understanding that and emphasizing self-control when the company recruited a new person proved more effective.

We can develop considerable self-awareness by attending courses and through feedback. But we will never develop and grow unless we have the desire and courage to change our behaviour. This means sometimes pushing ourselves out of our 'comfort zone' and developing what Matsushita called *torawarenai sunao-na kokoro* ('a mind that doesn't stick') – an agile and innovative mind.³⁶

Goleman refers to the ability to manage our emotions. Cooper refers to 'effectively applying' them. Our ability to effect personal change, and indeed to influence others, depends on how we manage our emotions and, in particular, whether we can maintain a self-empowering mind-set.

Take the model below (Figure 1) and think about your mind-set on a particular issue. This issue might be a situation of change or a situation in which you're unhappy with the performance of a work colleague.

Insert Figure1. Self-empowerment model



Let's consider change for a moment. It is a fact that change is going to happen, and with it there will be uncertainty or even chaos. The way that we lead other people through change will depend on how we lead ourselves through it. If we find it difficult to accept the fact of change, then our mind-set may be resentment. We start to talk in a resentful way: 'They shouldn't be doing this to me' (whoever 'they' are for you); 'I could do some really cool things around here if only my boss would let me'. From here it is only a small step to personal resignation: 'There's nothing I can do. What's the use of trying? They never listen anyway'. At best, all you are going to do is to achieve the *status quo*. But you are effectively dis-empowering yourself by saying that you can't do anything to change or influence the situation.

In contrast, accepting the situation immediately brings an inner peace. Only from this launch-pad can you create an ambition to take control of your situation and how it affects you. You are then empowering yourself. As Kjell Nordstrom says, 'It is what it is'.³⁷ Only when we accept this axiom can we do something about it.

A good clue as to where you are 'internally' is to look at the external, visible signs. Listen to the language you use and the conversations you have with others. Ask a colleague to give you feedback. If you are in the top two boxes of the model above, ask yourself what effect it is having on those whom you're leading.

Self-control first requires self-awareness – recognizing one's own emotions. Then it requires controlling one's own emotional behaviour. For example, in exercising such self-control, it is important to deal with a person's emotional reaction before attempting to resolve the problem.³⁸ What may get in the way of this is 'unconstructive mood matching', which is what happens when we display an emotional state that is similar to that of another person, with adverse consequences, e.g. displaying anger with somebody because the latter is angry with you.³⁹ Self-control means avoiding the use of emotive verbal expressions and negative body language which would exacerbate another person's negative emotion. Self-control involves self-awareness, displaying integrity, self-empowerment and being agile in our behaviour.

EI and awareness of others

Self-awareness and self-control are critical pre-requisites if we are to excel in the third major competency of emotional intelligence - awareness of others. Inter-personal insight is characterized by understanding others' motivation, aspirations, needs, interests, preferences, likes and dislikes, and feelings. The key to awareness

of others is empathy. Says Peter Drucker, 'The number one practical competency for leaders is empathy. Today, perceptiveness is more important than analysis.'⁴⁰

The essence of empathy is sensing what others feel without their saying so. We sense other people's feelings not through the words they use but through their body language – their tone of voice, facial expression and other non-verbal ways. For Nelson Mandela, 'To see the world through another man's eyes, you have to walk a mile in his shoes'.⁴¹

Empathy is the foundation for social competencies – understanding other people's feelings and needs, whether colleagues, subordinates, customers or bosses. Empathy is not necessarily agreeing with people; it is showing understanding of their feelings and needs. And perceived awareness and understanding of others builds trust. Once again the film *Dead Poets' Society* provides a vivid example: teacher John Keating (Robin Williams) displays hugely impressive empathy with student Anderson over his fear of creating and reciting a poem in class.

How do we achieve empathy? Emotionally intelligent leaders who do so use well-developed questioning skills – open and probing rather than closed and leading. They use active listening skills – paraphrasing the meaning or content of what the other person has just said and reflecting the feeling displayed through that person's body language. Active listening confirms to another person your understanding of his or her meaning and feelings. Understanding builds trust. And trust breeds powerful relationships.

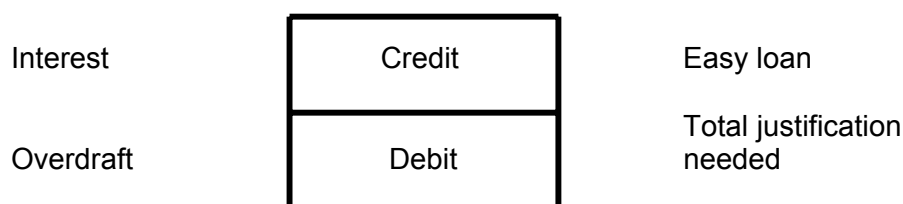
What is trust? At The Leadership Trust we define it thus: to give someone or something you hold valuable to someone else and know that it will be safe. Examples of what we hold valuable are money, knowledge, freedom, information and secrets.

Trust must be one of the key issues in human relationships. 'If there is no sense of trust in the organisation, if people are preoccupied with protecting their own backs, creativity will be one of the first casualties', says Manfred Kets de Vries.⁴² And up to half of all daily business activities may be wasted or compromised due to mistrust.⁴³ However, Simon Hollington at The Leadership Trust suggests that trust is the ultimate 'Catch 22' for any leader: when you exercise trust you take a risk; when you don't, you also take a risk. But we also believe that self-confidence is a necessary pre-requisite for trusting others: if you don't trust yourself, how can you expect others to trust you?

Trust is key to innovation, delegation, self-esteem and effectiveness in virtual teams, where their members are dispersed geographically. 'Learning about emotions and their impact is crucial for anyone who wants to get the best for themselves and their team. It is about learning the value of trust between managers and their staff – something that will be a way to deliver high standards of service.'⁴⁴ Trust is the emotional glue that binds relationships and organizations.⁴⁵

The metaphor for trust that we use in our leadership development programmes at The Leadership Trust is the 'emotional bank account', depicted in Figure 2:

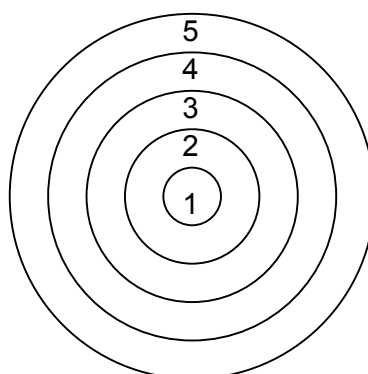
Figure 2. The Emotional Bank Account



What is it that constitutes a withdrawal or a deposit by other people in your bank account? Why does another person make a withdrawal? And what can you do about this to build trust?

Robert Cooper says that building trusting relationships is one of the three driving forces of competitive advantage.⁴⁶ This entails extending and sustaining our 'trust radius' with customers, staff and colleagues. At The Leadership Trust we use this concept in the Trust Circles model (Figure 3). Managers are asked to think of a colleague of whom their level of trust is lower than they wish, how often and with what they trust the colleague, and what they can do to increase that trust.

Figure 3. Trust Circles



Key:

Trusting the person with/how often

- 1 – with anything/always
- 2 – with most things/usually
- 3 – with some things/sometimes
- 4 – with one or two things/occasionally
- 5 – with nothing/never

EI and leadership skills

Our definition of leadership at The Leadership Trust is that leadership is using our personal power to win the hearts and minds of people to achieve a common purpose. Winning their minds is an intellectual task: people have to be convinced that the

organization's vision and strategies are rational and valid. Winning their hearts, however, requires emotional buy-in. Vision and strategy are impotent without leadership that takes account of emotions.⁴⁷ The insight that is required for leaders to be effective is not only analytical and creative: it is also emotional, and emotional insight concerns both yourself and other people. As former leader of an executive team at Ford Motor Company, Nick Zenuik, says...

Emotional intelligence is the hidden competitive advantage. If you take care of the soft stuff, the hard stuff takes care of itself.⁴⁸

Emotional intelligence therefore underpins our model of leadership that proposes that effective leaders...

- Communicate a compelling vision
- Create and promote shared values
- Develop and communicate rational strategies
- Empower people to be able to...
- Inspire and motivate people to want to...⁴⁹

EI and the research evidence

The past few years have witnessed a vast amount of research into emotional intelligence. Here are a few of the findings:

- 75% of the reasons why careers get derailed are EI-related.⁵⁰
- EI is twice as important as cognitive (intellectual) or technical skills for high job performance, and at the top level almost all-important (findings from profiles of top executives in 15 global companies including IBM, Pepsico and Volvo).⁵¹
- IQ accounts for as little as 4% of exceptional leadership, job performance and achievement; EI may account for over 90%.⁵²
- 70% of the reasons for losing clients or customers is EI-related.⁵³
- Owner-managers in small and medium-size enterprises with low emotional intelligence have been found to hold back their companies' growth by trying to hold on to total control.⁵⁴ Such managers displayed high independence, low trust, low empathy and high aggression, as well as extremely high stress.
- Financial advisers in American Express who had undergone training in emotional intelligence improved sales by up to 20%.⁵⁵
- Studies have quantified the benefits of using EI competency profiles, with savings at PepsiCo and a telecommunications firm amounting to £3 million and £1 million in recruiting senior managers and computer programmers respectively.⁵⁶
- A study of 100 management and business leaders in the UK over seven years revealed that 'emotional intelligence was more highly related to success than IQ alone'.⁵⁷ And taken together, EQ and IQ predict managerial success even better.⁵⁸

- Many other studies have shown how EI competencies are strongly associated with achievement and the bottom line.⁵⁹

According to Goleman,

High IQ makes you a good English professor; adding high EQ makes You chairman of the English Department...High IQ makes you a brilliant fiscal analyst; adding high EQ makes you CEO.⁶⁰

But the case for emotional intelligence is put perhaps most powerfully by Warren Bennis, one of the world's foremost thinkers and writers in the field of leadership:

...emotional intelligence is much more powerful than IQ in determining who emerges as a leader. IQ is a threshold competence. You need it, but it doesn't make you a star. Emotional intelligence can.⁶¹

Intellect – verbal, numerical and thinking skills – is important for effective leadership. However, it is not enough: emotional intelligence is an essential requirement for success. We believe that emotional intelligence *enables* the intellect: once the contagion of emotion is dissipated or controlled, the rational, analytical mind can function more effectively. Effective leadership truly engages the head and the heart – emotions as well as the intellect and reason.

EQ - measuring EI

A number of ways of measuring EI have been developed recently. The major instruments which we are aware of are:

- Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI) – published by HayMcBer in the USA and UK (developed by Goleman and Boyatzis)
- Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire – published by ASE in the UK (developed by Dulewicz and Higgs)
- SMS EQ Profile, specially designed for SMEs – published by Simmons Management Systems in the USA, represented in the UK by Buckholdt Associates
- EQ Map and Organizational EQ Map – published by Advanced Intelligence Technologies in the USA (developed by Robert Cooper and Ayman Sawaf)
- BarOn EQ-I Test – published by MHS in Canada, represented in the UK by Buckholdt Associates

Developing EI

Managerial learning is emotional; the traditional cognitive approach has ignored this.⁶² The understanding we now have about the importance of emotional intelligence in leadership - indeed in all aspects of effective interpersonal relationships - has led to new and improved leadership development programmes. We see these not only in the private sector but in the public sector too, for example in the development of senior civil servants.⁶³

The challenge is to devise training courses that will change the outdated command and control methods used by some managers into a style that incorporates self-knowledge and empathy.⁶⁴

Can emotional intelligence be learned? Research evidence suggests strongly that it can be.⁶⁵ For example, a study by The Landmark Forum and The Talent Foundation shows that it can.⁶⁶ 100 people who attended a 3½-day EI course compared with 100 people who did not do so showed significantly higher levels of motivation, self-esteem and confidence than those in the control group. The EI training of supervisors in a manufacturing plant in the USA resulted in reduction of lost-time accidents by 50%, reduction of formal grievances from an average of 15 per year to three per year, and the exceeding of productivity goals by \$250,000.⁶⁷

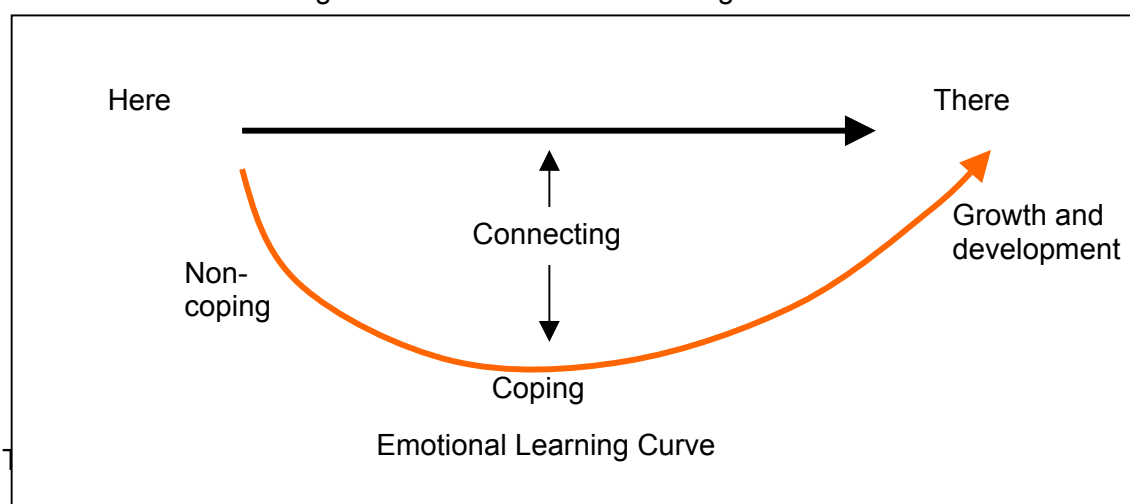
EI improves with age. Buckholdt Associates found that, whereas IQ peaks in the late-teens, EI shows a marked increase in the 30s, levels off until the late-50s and then mildly declines.⁶⁸ MHS of Canada found that older people are generally more aware of other people's feelings and are more socially responsible.⁶⁹

And while both men and women have EI, their profiles are different: women are much more aware of their own feelings as well as others' and relate better to others than men do, but men have higher self-regard and independence and are better at dealing with immediately stressful situations.⁷⁰ Men need to – and can – develop their empathy to balance their independence.

What does it take for emotional intelligence to be learned? There is no automatic link between self-awareness and self-control. The emotionally intelligent leader displays both characteristics. But self-aware people can also display arrogance and a lack of humility. Such people may not be willing or able to manage their emotions or adapt their behaviour, regardless of the feedback on its impact that they are receiving. The consequence can be an intellectual giant who cannot lead and develop a high-performing team owing to a lack of emotional intelligence. Creative people, for example, are commonly thought of as lacking in EI: they are said to be often sensitive, temperamental, arrogant and selfish.⁷¹

At The Leadership Trust we believe that emotional development along an emotional learning curve (Figure 4) is even more important than an intellectual understanding of what we want to achieve. This implies that you cannot learn to be emotionally intelligent simply using an intellectual model for doing so or by reading books on the subject.

Figure 4. The Emotional Learning Curve



probably buy into empowerment – intellectually. But the two greatest enemies of empowerment are fear of losing control and lack of trust. These are emotional responses. It is only when we learn to manage our emotions and have the courage to make changes that we can be truly empowering.

Also take values. Most of us have a professed set of values, and many of our organizations have published values statements. While we may fully understand the meaning of the words, they are easy to articulate and cost nothing to do so. In reality their application is more difficult. It is our actions and behaviour that are key. And it is our emotional blockages, rather than the intellectual ones, that we have to deal with. For example, at The Leadership Trust we have worked with a large multinational company over the past three years which professed several simple values, one of which was openness. Everybody accepted this value – intellectually. However, ‘telling it like it is’ was easier said than done. Values were made a reality only by making progress along the corporate emotional learning curve.

So the success of programmes and courses that aim to develop emotional intelligence and emotional resilience in leaders depends on the degree to which participants can make progress along their own individual emotional learning curves. In our programmes at The Leadership Trust we employ several key elements to develop participants’ emotional intelligence:

- We create situations that heighten individuals’ self-awareness and give them the opportunity to reflect on how they might manage their emotions more effectively more of the time. This may include 360-degree feedback.
- We create a learning environment that allows them to reflect on their emotions and not just on the process. We allow and encourage them to reflect on key emotional blocks and to develop personal strategies to handle and overcome them.
- We don’t try to ‘change’ people. Neither we nor you can do so. People are a product of their genes and environment, and this leaves people with their own emotional drivers. All that we do is to allow and encourage them to see the consequences of those drivers through the impact they have on others. They make their own decisions about what to do with that information.
- In doing this we give them full responsibility for their own learning. It is not our course – it’s theirs. After all, to develop emotional intelligence requires us in the first instance to take responsibility for ourselves and our behaviour.
- We give people a safe, expertly-facilitated learning environment so that they can push themselves out of their comfort zones and challenge their current mindset. As a result, participants gain the courage and self-confidence to apply this in the work environment.
- We also allow and encourage participants to reflect on the emotional needs of other people and on how they can develop the emotional intelligence skills of empathy and trust to work more effectively with their work colleagues.

Emotional intelligence is learned and developed primarily through feeling, not simply through reading a book and thinking about it. It is perhaps the single most important development need for leaders today.

Endnotes

- ¹ Helen Pickles, I feel, therefore I am. *Business Life*, July/August 2000, pp. 37-41.
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denotes weakness or tractability in a person, an openhearted innocence and a willingness to be sincere. One could say that a sunao mind is an untrapped mind, free to adapt itself effectively to new circumstances’.

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